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BOTSWANA SPEAKS GENDER ISSUES THROUGH POETRY

Mbizo Chirasha · Wednesday, December 4th, 2019

The Botswana Poetry Festival project was born through a collaborative effort of the Gender Affairs Department office in Molepolole and the Maruping Poetry Organization to foster cohesion, community engagement and involvement through literatures and spoken word arts. The Gender Affairs Department believes arts are vehicle for both edutainment and infotainment.

On the 31st July 2018, the Gender Affairs Department revived gender committees. These committees play a very vital role in the district as it allows community ownership of issues of gender and development, teamwork among communities themselves and leadership as well as better understanding of issues of gender and development. Community involvement is another good strategy to bring issues closer to people for ownership as gatekeepers of their own communities. The process started with training of members of the gender issues. The participants included stakeholders from Community Based Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and Government Departments and they all make up Gender Focal Persons at their respective offices and the district to make sure that we provide professional guidance on gender and development and create a gender sensitive environment conducive for the promotion of gender equality in the district.

The Kweneng District Gender Committee in collaboration with Maruping Poetry Organisation hosted an event named BOTSWANA INTERNATIONAL POETRY FESTIVAL and they joined other stakeholders in commemorating the 16 Days of Activism campaign through word of mouth at the Big Five Lodge Mogoditshane. Maruping Poetry Organization was founded on the 11th April 2016 as a Batswana non- profit organization. Maruping Poetry Organization is made up of experienced traditional and contemporary poets, story tellers, ululators, traditional instrument and writers. Maruping specializes in the use of performing arts to promote culture, educate and entertain the public. This initiative comes after Maruping Poetry Organization and the Kweneng District Gender Committee decided to provide edutainment in the form of poetry which is intended to captivate more people and distribute more information.

The festival started with a symposium on the role of the arts in our society, focusing on the 2019 theme, ‘’Orange the World; Generation Equality Stand Against Rape,’’ on the 28th November

2019 and a capacity building workshop where participants were capacitated on gender and development issues and had the opportunity to dialogue on issues of violence against women and children based on the theme adopted. On the 30th November 2019, that was when the actual event when poetry performances were done and all poems were based on violence against women and children and gender based violence in general and program started at 1800 hrs. This event catered for both contemporary and traditional poetry and it's free and open to all regardless of age, sex, cultural background and religion. Kindly note that the panelists and poets included international artists Macas Macavele from Mozambique, Wilson Waison Tinotenda from Zimbabwe, and South African Mzwakhe Kgagodi, Jowi Masopha, Thwazi Madhilekhile. They all participated in knowledge sharing, gender based violence themed poetry readings, cultural exchange and benchmark. This event is proudly sponsored by the European Union in Botswana.

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